

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 EB-07 L-03 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 OMB-01 IGA-02 /054 W

----- 074648

R 091230Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8735

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO JCS WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN, GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11053

SECDEF FOR ISA/DSAA

FROM AMBASSADOR VOLPE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM

REFS: (A) STATE 51768 DTG 031747Z MAR 76 (NOTAL);

(B) ROME 4300 DTG 161631Z MAR 76 (NOTAL);

(C) ROME 6174 DTG 141833Z APR 76 (NOTAL)

1. I HAVE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM GENERAL ANDREA CUCINO, CHIEF OF STAFF, ITALIAN ARMY:

BEGIN TEXT: MR. AMBASSADOR: AS IS KNOWN, THE ITALIAN ARMY SENDS OFFICERS AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS TO THE MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION OF YOUR COUNTRY FOR A TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL TRAINING IN MATERIALS RECENTLY PURCHASED IN THE UNITED STATES.

SO FAR, THIS SPECIFIC ACTIVITY PROVED TO BE EXTREMELY USEFUL AND IT WAS THEREFORE EXPECTED THAT IT WOULD BE PURSUED ALSO IN THE FUTURE.

HOWEVER, THE DECISION RECENTLY MADE BY THE U.S. ARMY INTERNATIONAL COMMAND TO INTRODUCE IN THE TRANSACTION CONCERNING TRAINING THE THE HAWK-HELIP SECTOR AN INCREASE
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WHICH TRIPLES THE COST, ORIGINALLY AGREED UPON, OF COURSES

THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED, ARE NOW IN PROGRESS AND STILL HAVE TO BE CONDUCTED, THWARTS THESE PLANS.

CONSIDERING OUR PARTICULAR ECONOMIC SITUATION, SUCH A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE FOR TRANSACTIONS WHICH ALREADY BY THEMSELVES ARE COSTLY, MAKES IT NECESSARY TO CANCEL THE TRAINING PROGRAMS ENVISAGED FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977 AND TO REQUEST AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE DECISION TO CHANGE THE COST OF COURSES INCLUDED IN TRANSACTIONS NOW BEING COMPLETED BE RE-EXAMINED.

IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE U.S. ARMY AND THE ITALIAN ARMY IN THIS PARTICULAR AREA, I WOULD APPRECIATE IF YOU WILL EXPLAIN THE DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE MEASURES THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN AND WILL INTERPOSE YOUR GOOD OFFICES SO THAT THE OBSTACLES OF AN ECONOMIC NATURE, WHICH HINDER THE CONTINUATION OF MILITARY TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES, MAY BE SURMOUNTED.

SINCERELY, S/ ANDREO CUCINO. END TEXT.

2. GENERAL CUCINO IS A STAUNCH FRIEND AND SUPPORTER OF THE U.S. AND NATO. HE REPRESENTS A SPECIES THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION IF WE CONTINUE OUR PRESENT COURSE IN DEALING WITH THE MILITARY SERVICES OF OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS. IN MY OWN VIEW, IT IS A GRAVE ERROR TO TREAT AS AN ITEM OF COMMERCE MILITARY TRAINING OFFERED TO OUR FRIENDS. WE ARE NOT SO MUCH SELLING TRAINING AS WE ARE BUYING THE COMMITMENT AND SENSE OF COMMON PURPOSE THAT COMES OUT OF SHARED EXPERIENCE AND EXPOSURE TO OUR VIEW OF THE WORLD. THE BENEFITS RETURNED TO THE U.S. FROM TRAINING PROGRAMS PROVIDED TO FRIENDLY MILITARY SERVICES ARE VIRTUALLY INCALCULABLE AND NOT ALWAYS INTANGIBLE. IN ITALY, FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS FROM AMONG THOSE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES WHO HAVE RECEIVED TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES THAT WE OBTAIN SUPPORT (OFTEN DESPITE THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP) FOR PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO OUR SECURITY OBJECTIVES.

3. AS I POINTED OUT IN AN EARLIER MESSAGE (REF C), THERE IS ALREADY A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTION BETWEEN THE OLDER MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES (MANY OF WHOM

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HAVE HAD SOME U.S. TRAINING) AND THE YOUNGER MEMBERS (FEW OF WHOM HAVE HAD ANY U.S. TRAINING). THE FORMER TEND TO BE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH, COOPERATIVE, AND COMMITTED TO THE US/ITALIAN AND NATO/ITALIAN RELATIONSHIP. THE LATTER DO NOT. IN THAT EARLIER MESSAGE I OFFERED SOME IDEAS AS TO HOW WE MIGHT BEGIN, AT LEAST TENTATIVELY, TO CORRECT THAT SITUATION. MY SUGGESTIONS WERE MADE IN THE RECOGNITION THAT ITALIAN FORMAL TRAINING NEEDS HAVE NECESSARILY DIMINISHED WITH THE

INCREASED ABILITY OF THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN TRAINING IN MANY SECTORS. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT THEREFORE TO FACILITATE...RATHER THAN OBSTRUCT...ATTENDANCE AT THOSE U.S. PROGRAMS WHICH PROVIDE TRAINING THAT CANNOT EASILY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE ITALIANS THEMSELVES, BOTH TO SUPPLY THE EXPERTISE WHICH PERMITS ITALY TO CONTRIBUTE MORE EFFECTIVELY TO ALLIED AND U.S. SECURITY AND TO CEMENT MORE CLOSELY THE BONDS BETWEEN OUR ARMED SERVICES. I WOULD AGREE THAT TOKEN CHARGES SHOULD BE LEVELLED FOR PARTICIPATION IN U.S. TRAINING PROGRAMS. BUT TO PASS ON THE FULL BURDEN OF TRAINING COSTS (THE GREATER PART OF WHICH REMAIN WHETHER OR NOT FOREIGN STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED) IS IN MY VIEW SHORT-SIGHTED AND WILL IN THE NEAR TERM DAMAGE OUR RELATIONS WITH THE ARMED FORCES OF ITALY AS WELL AS OF OUR OTHER ALLIES.

4. GENERAL CUCINO RAISES A FURTHER GRIEVANCE, THE RETRO-ACTIVE ASSESSMENT OF ADDED COSTS FOR COURSES IN PROGRESS OR COMPLETED, WITH WHICH I MUST COMPLETELY AGREE. HERE, IN MY VIEW, WE BECOME INVOLVED IN THE BASIC QUESTION OF HONORING AGREEMENTS. I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN JUSTIFY SUCH AN ACTION. APART FROM THE ISSUE OF THE CONTRACTUAL ASPECT OF TRAINING IN PROGRESS, THERE IS THE SERIOUS IMPACT UPON THE BUDGET PRIORITIES OF THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. THE ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT WILL NECESSARILY REQUIRE BUDGETARY READJUSTMENTS THAT WILL IN TURN DETRACT FROM VITAL PROGRAMS IN THE MODERNIZATION OF THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES, AND JUST AS IMPORTANT, CANCEL ALL FUTURE TRAINING PROGRAMS.

5. IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE ENTIRE ISSUE OF TRAINING COSTS CAN BE REEXAMINED, WITH DUE CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO THE LONG TERM IMPACT UPON OUR FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES. THIS, CONFIDENTIAL

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IT SEEMS TO ME, MAY WELL BE AN INSTANCE IN WHICH WE ARE BEING PENNY-WISE AND POUND-FOOLISH. BY TRYING TO RECOUP THE "REAL" COST IN INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO FOREIGN TRAINEES, WE CAN EXPECT TO ELIMINATE THE KIND OF TRAINEES IN WHICH WE ARE MOST INTERESTED AND THE "REAL" COST WILL REMAIN TO BE PAID BY US. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, COSTS, MILITARY TRAINING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ROME11053
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760266-0017
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760774/aaaacmpz.tel
Line Count: 160
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 51768
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <26 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHANGES IN FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM
TAGS: MASS, IT, US
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006